

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

105th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 135

June 26, 1997, 5:06 pm
Page S-6436 Temp. Record

TAXPAYER RELIEF ACT/\$8 Billion More for Child Health Insurance

SUBJECT: Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 . . . S. 949. Roth motion to waive the Budget Act for the consideration of the language of the Roth amendment No. 520, as amended, throughout the reconciliation process.

ACTION: MOTION AGREED TO, 80-19

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 949, the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, will provide net tax relief of \$76.8 billion over 5 years and \$238 billion over 10 years. The cost will be more than offset by the economic dividend (\$355 billion over 10 years) that will result from balancing the budget in fiscal year (FY) 2002. This bill will enact the largest tax cut since 1981 and the first tax cut since 1986. It will give cradle-to-grave tax relief to Americans: it will give a \$500-per-child tax credit, education tax relief, savings and investment tax relief, retirement tax relief, and estate tax relief. Over the first 5 years, approximately three-fourths of the benefits will go to Americans earning \$75,000 or less. It will eliminate a third of the increased tax burden imposed by the 1993 Clinton tax hike, which was the largest tax hike in history.

The Roth amendment, as amended, would add \$8 billion to the \$16 billion children's health initiative approved on the Balanced Budget Act (for related debate, see vote Nos. 128-130 and 149). A bipartisan agreement was reached in the Finance Committee to add this \$8 billion and to pay for it with an increase in tobacco excise taxes (for cigarettes, the Federal excise tax will rise from 24 cents per pack to 44 cents per pack) which will increase revenues by \$14.8 billion over 5 years and by \$29.9 billion over 10 years. For parliamentary reasons, the spending was added in this amendment rather than putting it in the bill as reported. Putting it in the bill would have violated reconciliation instructions. With the adoption of the Roth amendment, the States would receive a total of \$24 billion over the next 5 years either to enroll currently uninsured children in Medicaid or to develop their own programs to provide insurance. Plans developed by States would meet the requirements for Federal employee health plans, and would be encouraged to have vision, hearing, and dental coverage. The tobacco tax increase will be permanent; the \$8 billion will be provided as a State (though not an individual) entitlement over the next 5 years.

Debate on a first-degree amendment to a reconciliation bill is limited to two hours. Debate was further limited by unanimous

(See other side)

YEAS (80)				NAYS (19)		NOT VOTING (1)	
Republican (36 or 67%)		Democrats (44 or 98%)		Republicans (18 or 33%)	Democrats (1 or 2%)	Republicans (1)	Democrats (0)
Abraham	Hatch	Akaka	Johnson	Ashcroft	Ford	Roberts- ²	
Allard	Hutchison	Baucus	Kennedy	Coats			
Bennett	Jeffords	Biden	Kerrey	Coverdell			
Bond	Kempthorne	Bingaman	Kerry	Craig			
Brownback	Lott	Boxer	Kohl	Faircloth			
Burns	Lugar	Breaux	Landrieu	Gramm			
Campbell	Mack	Bryan	Lautenberg	Grams			
Chafee	McCain	Bumpers	Leahy	Gregg			
Cochran	Murkowski	Byrd	Levin	Helms			
Collins	Roth	Cleland	Lieberman	Hutchinson			
D'Amato	Santorum	Conrad	Mikulski	Inhofe			
DeWine	Shelby	Daschle	Moseley-Braun	Kyl			
Domenici	Smith, Gordon	Dodd	Moynihan	McConnell			
Enzi	Snowe	Dorgan	Murray	Nickles			
Frist	Specter	Durbin	Reed	Sessions			
Gorton	Stevens	Feingold	Reid	Smith, Bob			
Grassley	Thomas	Feinstein	Robb	Thompson			
Hagel	Warner	Glenn	Rockefeller	Thurmond			
		Graham	Sarbanes				
		Harkin	Torricelli				
		Hollings	Wellstone				
		Inouye	Wyden				

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

1—Official Business
2—Necessarily Absent
3—Illness
4—Other

SYMBOLS:

AY—Announced Yea
AN—Announced Nay
PY—Paired Yea
PN—Paired Nay

consent. After debate, Senator Domenici raised the point of order that the amendment violated section 302(f) of the Budget Act. Senator Roth then moved to waive all points of order against the amendment language for the consideration of this amendment and for the consideration of the language at later stages of the reconciliation process. Generally, those favoring the motion to waive favored the amendment; those opposing the motion to waive opposed the amendment.

NOTE: A three-fifths majority (60) vote is required to waive the Budget Act. After the vote, the amendment was adopted by voice vote.

Those favoring the motion to waive contended:

Much of the 103d Congress was consumed by partisan wrangling over a health care initiative. Nothing was accomplished. This week, in a bipartisan effort, \$24 billion will be provided to insure children who are currently uninsured. We are amazed and delighted by this turn of events. This money primarily is to get health care to those children whose families are too well off to receive Medicaid and are too poor to purchase private insurance. There are approximately 10 million such children in America today; this \$24 billion will take care of all or most of them. Compromises were made on both sides in developing the approach to giving this aid, and in the end we suspect that Congress will have little to do with solving the problem because we think that most States will elect to take the block grant option and design their own solutions. The offset we have chosen for this increased spending, a higher tobacco tax, is especially appropriate because enacting this tax will itself save the lives of many of these uninsured, low-income children. Such children are the ones most likely to take up smoking and then suffer the serious health consequences from making that poor decision. Numerous studies have proven that higher tobacco prices are enough to dissuade many children from starting this horrible habit. In America today, middle-income and wealthy Americans have health insurance, and so do welfare recipients, but the working poor who are fighting to make ends meet cannot afford insurance for their kids. This amendment would add \$8 billion to the \$16 billion provided in the previous bill to change this unacceptable situation. These changes were suggested to the bill managers and have been agreed to by them. We urge Senators to vote in favor of this additional spending.

Those opposing the motion to waive contended:

We oppose the funding source Senators have approved for this additional health insurance spending. That source is a tobacco tax increase. That tax increase will fall on working, low-income Americans. The farmers who raise and sell tobacco typically earn less than \$30,000 per year, and the people who smoke have disproportionately low incomes as well. Those Senators who are always demanding that we tax the rich so that Congress can create more Federal social programs for the poor are the strongest supporters of this tax. They are demanding a tax on the working poor to start a new Federal social program for the working poor. What happened to our colleagues' speeches about "tax fairness" and progressivity? It appears that their rhetoric was just so much airy persiflage. We oppose the tax increase, which was added for the spending in this amendment, so we oppose this amendment as well.